

qualifications, and we reported him out to the full Senate immediately.

I am hopeful that under Mr. Missal's leadership, the VA Office of Inspector General will restore veterans' trust in the inspector general's office, protect VA whistleblowers, and forge a new relationship with Congress, but above all else, I hope Mr. Missal will use his position to help ensure the finest among us receives the high-quality care they deserve.

I am confident Mr. Missal is up to the task, and I thank him for agreeing to serve in this supporting role.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination: Calendar No. 448 only, with no other executive business in order.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report the nomination.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Michael Joseph Missal, of Maryland, to be Inspector General, Department of Veterans Affairs.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nomination.

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I know of no further debate on the nomination.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If there is no further debate, the question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Missal nomination?

The nomination was confirmed.

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table, the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action, and the Senate then resume legislative session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will now resume legislative session.

FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION ACT OF 2016

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, after months of debate and piecemeal short-term reauthorizations, the Senate has finally approved a comprehensive reauthorization of the Federal Aviation Administration, FAA, that will improve the safety and efficiency of our Nation's airline transportation system. The Federal Aviation Administration Act of 2016 will not only make airline travel safer and more efficient, it will also strengthen our economy by creating jobs and supporting those who rely on the benefits of airline transpor-

tation, day to day. From protecting the rights and safety of airline employees, to ensuring the needs of passengers with disabilities are recognized and upheld, this legislation takes necessary steps to improve travel experiences for all Americans.

I am especially pleased that the Federal Aviation Administration Act includes a number of policies that will benefit Vermont's airports, including the preservation of the Essential Air Service program, an important source of support for the Rutland-Southern Vermont Regional Airport. The bill also increases Airport Improvement Program funding, which is essential to the expansion and improvements of airports in Vermont and across the country. Also importantly, the bill will not privatize the Air Traffic Control System.

As the opportunities and challenges associated with new technology continue to evolve—both in NextGen implementation and use of drones—it is important that safety remains a top priority. This FAA reauthorization bill takes steps to address the safety and privacy concerns related to the widespread proliferation of unmanned aircraft within our domestic airspace. The legislation adds several provisions to increase safety by adding new technical and operational standards. For example, the bill requires the FAA and government agencies to collaborate with industry stakeholders to develop guidelines and procedures to ensure the safe integration of drones into the national airspace. I was also pleased that the bill addresses certain privacy concerns about the use of drones by requiring the FAA to establish a publicly accessible website containing information about commercial and government drone operations, the type of information those drones will collect, and how that information will be used. While the drone-related provisions in the bill are an improvement from the status quo, I believe that we must do more to ensure that safety and privacy safeguards are improved.

In Vermont, our airports are essential to a strong economy. They facilitate both tourism and commerce, and they are a source of economic growth for our communities. I am disappointed that, despite support from 99 other Senators, the objections of just one Senator prevented the passage of an amendment that would further facilitate travel and commerce between the United States and Canada, our largest trading partner. Expanding U.S. preclearance operations in Canada not only improves the travel experience for Americans traveling back and forth between Canada, but encourages neighbors to the north to visit the United States and infuses our economies through tourism and commerce. Importantly, it also furthers our national security. I will be looking for opportunities to advance this legislation moving forward.

The Federal Aviation Administration Act represents a strong step forward in

keeping the U.S. airspace as the safest and most efficient in the world. I hope that, as the House takes up this important legislation, they will maintain the carefully balanced proposals included in the Senate bill.

Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, I voted no on final passage of the FAA reauthorization bill because I was unable to offer my amendment to ensure that cargo pilots have the same rest and duty rules as passenger pilots.

Not only was I unable to secure a vote on my amendment, my offer to modify my amendment into a study by the National Transportation Safety Board was objected to by the other side. We should ensure that all pilots, whether they fly people or goods, have the same opportunities for rest. As this bill has many safety implications for our aviation system, I am very disappointed that my amendment did not receive consideration in the Senate.

However, I would like to thank the Senate Commerce Committee for their hard work on this bill, which includes many safety improvements, helpful consumer protections, and enhancements to airport security. I am particularly pleased that the bill includes a provision to ban the use of electronic cigarettes on board aircraft that I had asked to be included in this bill.

Mr. BOOKER. Mr. President, today the Senate approved legislation to reauthorize the Federal Aviation Administration—FAA—for 18 months. I applaud the work of my colleagues, Senators THUNE and NELSON, and their staff who worked tirelessly to get this important legislation over the finish line. I hope leaders in the House of Representatives see what we passed here in the Senate and ensure smooth passage of the bill. This legislation truly represents bipartisan compromise. While it takes important steps forward, more work remains to be done to ensure the United States remains a global leader in aviation, safety, and innovation.

This legislation advanced many key priorities that I was proud to fight for. Aviation is a critical means of travel for people in my State and across the country, and I am confident that this legislation takes strides to improve the status quo for travelers.

I worked to advance provisions that help improve accessibility for persons with disabilities traveling through our Nation's commercial air system. The increased and improved data collected as a result of this legislation and the new advisory committee put in place will help fuel effective policies that enhance the traveling experience for persons with disabilities and remove barriers to accessibility.

The legislation will help improve the use of disadvantaged business enterprises in aviation infrastructure. I authored an amendment to align the size standard used by the Department of Transportation—DOT—to identify small businesses, with the metric used